

*How Small Businesses Are Supporting America's Energy Renaissance*  
U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship  
Field Hearing  
Lake Charles, LA  
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It may seem out of place for the Chancellor of a Technical Community College to be testifying at a hearing about how small businesses are supporting America's Energy Renaissance. However, I consider SOWELA Technical Community College to not only be an institution of higher learning but also a small business enterprise. Because of \$80 + billion in planned industrial expansions in the petro-chemical and LNG/GTL energy sector in Southwest Louisiana, SOWELA has been given the opportunity and responsibility to provide the training programs and services needed to produce the workforce necessary to help construct these massive industrial expansions.

According to the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the number of annual completers required to fill the occupations of highest need for the energy sector expansion in the region are:

- Construction crafts field = 9360
- Industrial Production = 4955
- Welding = 4810

Since 2012, SOWELA has begun to design, create, implement, and/or expand training programs requested by industry to help meet the demands of the burgeoning energy sector expansions. Programs concerning our skill crafts such as pipefitting, Millwright, welding, insulators, scaffolding, concrete forming, machining, sheet metal, electrician, lab analysis, and Non-destructive testing have been added to instructional program options at the College. Enrollment in high demand programs directly related to the energy sector such as Process Technology and Industrial Instrumentation have literally doubled in enrollment in the past couple of years. Furthermore, due to industry demands and to place students into the energy workforce quicker, SOWELA had to be entrepreneurial and create a compressed PTech program to provide the opportunity for students to earn an Associate of Applied Science degree in just 16 weeks. The first FastTrack PTech class contained 18 students – two of which had Associate's degrees, 12 who held Bachelor's degrees, two who held Master's degrees, and one who had already earned a

Doctorate degree. So as you can see, these energy sector jobs are highly sought after positions that have and will continue to attract individuals to the region for better employment opportunities.

SOWELA is concentrating on the energy sector workforce needs of the regional economy; however, according to the Energy Sector Jobs to 2030: A Global Analysis published by the Institute for Sustainable Futures in 2009, the 2020 global energy sector is expected to employ an estimated 10.5 million workers. By 2030 global sector energy jobs are expected to grow by an additional 800,000 workers totaling an estimated 11.3 million employees.

The energy sector, comprised of small, medium and large businesses, will experience significant and steady demand for skilled workers over the next 15 years on a regional, state, national, and global level. Therefore, SOWELA as one of these small business enterprises must be prepared with the programs, services, and financial resources necessary to help produce this massive workforce.

However, meeting the workforce demands of the expanding energy sector is a very daunting task which is going to require strategic efforts on the part of many collaborative partners. SOWELA has developed training partnerships with the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union, the secondary school systems in the five-parish region, and the Associated Builders and Contractors. Many of the short-term training programs focusing on the craft skills are non-credit which makes them unavailable for federal financial aid. Since 84% of community college students' work and 60% work more than 20 hours per week, our students cannot afford to quit their jobs and take advantage of skills training programs in which no financial aid is available.

Fortunately, various private industries such as CB&I, Praxair, Bechtel, and Capital One have stepped forward to provide scholarships for students seeking entry into these programs. Furthermore, one of our strongest partners is the Regional Workforce Investment Board who helps certify our training programs and ensure that the programs are eligible for federal, state, and local dollars. The WIBs have enabled many individuals to gain access to the training programs necessary to enable them to take advantage of the employment opportunities available in the booming energy sector fields of the region.

SOWELA is one of the 13 colleges in the Louisiana Community and Technical College System and a major part of the mission at each college is workforce development. We have a golden opportunity to shape the future of Louisiana and the nation as a whole by producing the

workforce needed to ensure that America continues to produce the energy necessary to fuel an economy that will provide financial and economic stability, vitality, and prosperity for generations to come.